

Advice for the Seekers of Knowledge

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(Sheikhy notes)

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Contents

Introduction	8
Chapter One: Your knowledge Is Pointless	10
Chapter Two: Intention Of The Learner	12
Chapter Three: How To Ask A Scholar A Question	14
Chapter Four: Sitting In Lectures	16
Chapter Five: Choice Of Teacher	20
Chapter Six: The Right That Learnt Knowledge Has Over You	22
Chapter Seven: Waiting For The Scholar	24
Chapter Eight: Studying	26
Chapter Nine: Teacher Pet	28
Chapter Ten: Students Attire	30
Chapter Eleven: Errors Of The Teacher	32
Chapter Twelve: Sins Of The Students	34
Chapter Thirteen: Character With Other Students	36
Chapter Fourteen: Instructions Of The Teacher	38
Chapter Fifteen: Knowledge	40
Chapter Sixteen: Signs of Success	42
Chapter Seventeen: Advice For The Teacher	44
Chapter Eighteen: Respecting The Teacher	46
Chapter Nineteen: Instruments Of Learning	48
Chapter Twenty: Harm From Others When Learning	50
Chapter Twenty One: Respecting Scholars	52
Chapter Twenty Two: Respecting The Sacred Word	54
Chapter Twenty three: Cutting Corners	56
Chapter Twenty four: When Imparting Knowledge	58
Chapter Twenty five: Gaps In Study	60
Chapter Twenty Six: Document Your Studies	62

Introduction

Advice for the Seekers of Knowledge

This is a treatise that outlines what a student may encounter in his journey to knowledge and more importantly it explains how a student should prepare himself.

We were inspired to write this because of the bad behaviour we witnessed that students showed to their teachers. One post turned into two as more advice was needed then more posts were added until we reached twenty six chapters.

We hope that we have covered all the important points that a student of knowledge should bear in mind. Sometimes we plan but are plans are overtaken by the greatest of planners. We hope that this will benefit the believers and we hope that Allah supports us by allowing us to acting upon this advice.

This treatise comprises all the previous posts on the 'Advice for the seekers of knowledge' that was originally posted on Sheikhy Notes.

All praise belongs to Allah and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Chapter One

Your Knowledge Is Pointless

I was typing up some notes for my blog, these notes were from the advice that Sheikh Haroon Hanif gave at the end of the Bradford Halaqa.

I had finished typing and not really understood or reflected about what he said and then the computer crashed. After re-booting it I found that the final line was no longer there, as it was from a previous save, the computer did not recover the entire file.

So I found the last line and typed it in and then word program closed itself down, and I was no longer able to access the file. I rebooted it again then I typed in the same last line and posted it on the blog and then after publishing it on the blog. I finally read the line,

“Your knowledge is pointless when it doesn’t bring you closer to Allah Subhanu wa Ta’ala.”

A few weeks later I told Sheikh Haroon about this he said,

“Subhanllah, Subhanllah.”

How many times did I miss it?

The whole point of knowledge is that you benefit before it benefits others and the final goal of all knowledge is to bring you closer to Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala.

Chapter Two

Intention Of The Learner

I wish to extent on what was said before. Your intention must be solely to attain Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala s pleasure in learning.

Please see this dua and intention of the learner on this link (thanks to the person who sent the link in)

<http://www.haqonline.com/halaqa/intentions.html>

You should make your intention before going out to learn; before you set out to learn. Make dua to understand the knowledge and implement, the knowledge you have learnt practically.

What you have learned must benefit you, if it doesn't it's like a man who is given soap he doesn't use it and complains about the smell of other people. Or like the man who sells soap but never uses it thinking it enough that he can sell it; he doesn't have to use it. This person is deluded; wake up, if you do not benefit from your knowledge what is the point of attending the lecture.

Although your reward in passing on your knowledge is there; even if the people do not do the action but the words are that much stronger with action behind them.

If you are in state where you don't practise what you preach, then you are worse off than someone who doesn't know. The fact you have learned something can be a proof against you and not for you.

You should not learn to make feel people feel inferior or to degrade them; if you do this then it better that you remain ignorant and stay at home. There is no point in learning if you are just doing it to win an argument. This shows insincerity and a lack of respect to the knowledge and these things will actually take your further away from Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala, not closer.

Make it easy for others and don't make it hard, be harsh on yourself; if you want to be harsh on anyone.

A person shouldn't be forced to learn except in what is obligatory for him to learn, after that they should decide. The obligatory knowledge is enough; Prayer, Basic belief, a text of purification and or any other knowledge that a person needs in their situation; i.e. buying and selling etc.

Purify your intention and make it solely for Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala. This may mean you have to go back and re-check your intention several times.

Chapter Three

How To Ask A Scholar A Question

This is something I do which it is also a reminder for me.

First of all you should observe the scholar and see if he is receptive to questions, he may be tired and need rest, or the session may be over and people may have to leave that area.

Approach with caution and give Salams

The question: you need to make the question as short as possible, really think about the question and don't ask questions that have been asked before. Listen to lecture or lesson carefully; has the scholar already answered the question. Don't waste the time of the scholar.

Also wait until the subject is completed because your question may be answered late on in the lesson. Please also note you may come across scholars who do not like to be asked questions and this can a bearing on the answer that you may receive. If you come across this then try to ask someone else and do not be offended.

Your question should be clear and he should be able to hear your voice.

After you have asked the question, give him/her time to think and respond, this is the most important advice, because they may give you more than what you asked for. If that's the case wait listen carefully, they be answering your question indirectly or explaining the bigger picture.

If you don't understand then say that you don't understand.

Once they have finished speaking then respond and wait again. Ask now for clarification, if you need to.

In private matters, ask to see the scholar in private and be discreet

Don't speak over the scholars words, let the scholar finish.

After you have asked the question, thank him for the lecture/lesson and his answer.

If you didn't get the answer that you want and need to ask someone else, do so but don't mention you have spoken to someone else and this should be avoided.

Remember the greatest statement that a student ever asked was, "I don't understand." The best answer was, "I don't know."

So to recap the method:

1. Ask the question
2. Wait
3. Do not interrupt
4. Once they begin speaking let them finish. Do not interrupt, thinking they have misunderstood the question. In fact never interrupt once they have started.
5. Once they have finished, ask for clarification.
6. Thank them and ask for a supplication!

Try this out this method and provide us with some feedback.

When the question has been answered and you have found wanting in the question; ask again but be careful your question may not have an answer or it might be better for you if the question is not answered. Some questions do not have answers because they are flawed, logically.

Chapter Four

Sitting In Lectures

These are things I need to implement in myself

The intention for the student should be that he/she is learning for the Sake of Allah to implement what he knows and therefore drawing himself closer to Allah. Try to make a dua for assistance with lesson, if you don't know a dua recite Sura Fatiha before you go in.

A student should arrive on time for the lecture and assist in setting up the teaching space with anything necessary such as barriers, tables, desks, book rests and or hand outs.

Then they should come with notepad and pen to make notes to be reviewed within a few days of the lecture. If you do not come with a notepad and pen, you will not be able to remember much of the lesson afterwards.

You should concentrate as much as you are able to, in the lesson. Show respect to the teacher by focusing on the lesson. If you speak it should only to help a colleague even then it should be briefly.

If you talk during a lesson its shows disrespect to the knowledge that you are trying to take. If you ask a question either make eye contact with the teacher and ask but it is better for you to say the scholars name and then ask.

Note sometimes time is allocated specifically for questions, so withhold until then. Try to avoid shouting out or making comments that maybe amusing to you but may annoy some students and even the teacher.

If you don't understand something and are shy in asking a question, it now becomes important for to ask the question. Otherwise you will not understand the topic and the rest of the session you will not be able to

understand the lesson. In a lecture you must wait until the end and try to understand as much until then.

For the manners of asking questions then go to the other chapter on asking questions. It is better to sometimes ask question in private but other times if it relates to the text then ask in the lesson as someone else might not understand.

If you ask a question during the lecture then it must be clear, so others can hear as well as yourself and the scholar. If someone asks a question and you know the answer or that it seems like a silly question remain silent and listen. You may receive more knowledge than your understanding. Do not ever laugh out loud because you think that persons question is funny this shows disrespect to everyone.

Try not to move too much in the lesson and avoid fiddling with papers or materials.

If you have to leave the lecture then leave as discreetly as possible and apologise to the teacher, if you are able to.

Do not argue with the teacher, know he has more knowledge than you and you should respect this and not annoy them.

If the teacher is writing onto a board then copy down everything that he was written, even if you already know it. If something isn't clearly written then confirm by asking.

If you notice a mistake by the teacher you should mention it very discreetly and when no one is there but it may be a mistake in your understanding. So you could say, "I thought it was like..." or, "Isn't it..."

Generally you should cover the faults of your teachers especially the ones you see in private as they are you brothers/sisters as well.

After a lecture it is good manners to thank the teacher for giving the lesson. Then put anything that you moved back into place, leave the place as you left it or better.

Chapter Five

Choice Of Teacher

In our time, having a choice of teacher is a real luxury. If you have this luxury then chose the one with the best character then learn from him.

If you learn from he who has more knowledge but has bad character know that you too will be infected by his character and may or may not pass it on or even embody it.

Religion is not just knowledge it is character as well, remove your soul from the bad actions of people and the bad practices of the culture.

Your teacher should inspire you to be like him because he is a reflection of the Prophetic character.

If you are unable to find any other teacher locally, travel to places where you can obtain knowledge, if you are unable to so, learn the teacher and guard yourself and don't let your heart incline to bad character, for one second.

If you can only find one teacher and he has bad character then study with him but do not copy them except in knowledge.

Be careful what you share with your teacher and likewise never share anything personal of his with other people.

Chapter Six

The Right That Learnt Knowledge Has Over You

These are things I need to put into place.

The right of knowledge has over the learner is that he remember it or remembers the general or specific piece of the knowledge that has been learnt. He/she has now learnt something and if it is internal knowledge they need to inculcate it, if its information then the person must remember for future reference and teach it to others.

First and foremost the knowledge must benefit the learner, if it does not then there is little benefit knowing something that you are not going implement yourself.

Worse than that your knowledge is not benefitting you in any way, you must not content to be a donkey by passing on knowledge that you yourself do not benefit. Then how can you expect others to, people will only benefit from your knowledge if you do.

When you are passing information on make it easy to understand and teach it in a way that they can easily understand. Also know that some people who you wish to advise may not take kindly to what you are telling them because of various reasons.

So inform them in a nice way and then don't expect them to follow up.

You should not look at others to be less than you when you know they do not have the knowledge on a subject that you do, you should look at yourself as less. As keenly as you search knowledge as keenly you should preserve the knowledge that you have learnt.

Chapter Seven

Waiting For The Scholar

When you have agreed to meet a scholar in a time and place be on time, but at the same time do not be alarmed if the scholar is late or does not turn up.

He may have some difficulty that you are not aware of, so do not expect him/her there, if they do turn up and that's a blessing.

Other times the Scholar may not want to do a lot because they are tired or need to go elsewhere, so expect this as well. If he needs to go somewhere then let him go and do not mind.

Try to be patient and do not get annoyed, if the lesson is cancelled do not be surprised but arrange another lesson and keep your attendance up.

Know that your teacher has other duties, family or otherwise, that he will have to take care of. Expect cancellation of classes, lectures even courses.

Do not be put off by any of this and remain steadfast on this path.

Chapter Eight

Studying

Study only, the text that you are currently reading, as if you will never study it again and that you'll never get a chance to study it again. Make every second count, study the text before and after the lesson.

Be serious about this and do not slacken, self study should be only for topics like history and then if you have a question would you go forward and ask.

It is very easy to get distracted, so be aware that satan does not like the fact that you are studying, so concentrate.

Repeat the same lessons until its part of you.

Do not eat too much or little, enough that will aid your studies, if it's a particular food then eat it. I find chocolate slows my thinking down, it may be different for you, anything fresh is better.

Thinking about your lesson is better than doing it and forgetting about. On your way home ponder what you have studied as Imam Nawawi used to. Also talking about your lesson to others can help.

Chapter Nine

Teachers Pet

Everyone wants to have the teacher think that they are the best student and that they are the most important student in the lesson. I would even go so far as say even outside the lesson. You may also wish to distinguish yourself in your teacher's lessons. You want the teacher to look at you and you alone; you want to answer all the questions; you want to get all the answers right; you want to be the focus of the class.

This is an obstacle to your learning and you have to be careful because this can cause real harm. You see now you are searching for the pleasure of the teacher not the pleasure of Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala. There is nothing wrong with trying to earn the teachers respect and supplications but the whole point of learning is to do it solely for Allah (Mighty and Majestic) and not so your teacher thinks he is a good student. If you are after this aim then you are going astray and your intention has to be renewed.

Distance yourself from this and do not let your heart accept this. Whenever you get an answer right do not think that you are a good student because you may not get next question right!

We are not saying disrespect your teacher no, we are saying have your intention clear and try not to let yourself be distracted. As this is a major distraction for any student, the line is very fine and it is necessary to be careful.

Focus on the lesson and ignore the fact that you may be the teacher's pet or you may not be. Sometimes a student will want the teacher to look at him - avoid this. Do not move excessively or use any other way to attract the teacher's attention. Just study in the lesson and do not let this effect you.

Do not even think about becoming the teacher's pet - focus on the lesson and do not let anything distract you from understanding the lesson.

Chapter Ten

Students Attire

The student should try to wear the best clothes that are available to him. Not that he should have the latest fashion rather he should try to wear clothes that are in good condition.

He should be clean and not wear anything that causes discomfort to anyone. This includes wearing designer labels that are clearly visible or any kind of shirt that could distract others from the lesson.

The clothes need to cover the body as appropriate for each gender.

The student needs to consider the average dress of others. If they are all coming in one type of dress and you choose a different type of dress then you will stand out. This is not a good idea either.

Mobile phone must remain off or on silent unless there is a need for it; like life or death.

Do not show up the teacher by wearing clothes that are the same as them; this is not good manners.

Chapter Eleven

Errors Of The Teacher

This is a tricky one, you may have a teacher who mocks you or makes fun of you or teases you. If this occurs, overlook it, whilst you are studying with him. Do not let yourself dislike your teacher, concentrate on your subject and do not waver. If it is a subject that doesn't make a difference to your daily needs, in terms of knowledge, you may think about finding another teacher.

Or you could simply finish the text with that scholar and then find another teacher. To find another teacher may be more difficult than it may seem.

The best advice is to study with him and ignore his manners, unless it reaches a limit that it becomes common knowledge. So that he may be condemned by the average person.

Study hard and keep your work up, do not allow yourself to be distracted by anyone.

Knowledge is too precious to be distracted from by something small.

It is also important to note that the teacher may not think he is mocking you when he does. He may think it is funny and that you too are taking it as a joke as well.

Only consider leaving the teacher if you know he commits major wrong actions publicly and he doesn't repent openly. Also please note, you may have a teacher who is gossiped about, so check the stories you hear and don't take the persons word for it.

You may have students that are jealous of you and don't want you to study with that scholar, so beware of that as well.

Chapter Twelve

Sins Of The Students

Let it be known, that sins of the students will cause him nothing but grief. He will lose knowledge that he has and will lose what he didn't know he had.

Avoid sin like it is a raging fire in your house, move away slowly and then don't look at it, don't even think about it. Do not give in at any cost, you will lose more than you could imagine.

Don't see any sin as small or minor see them all as major sins, repent and keep repenting until you leave it. When you have left it then thank Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala, for keeping you safe.

If your heart inclines to sin, fight it, do something else. Go outside if you are in and go inside if you are out. Seek forgiveness straight away when your heart inclines to sin, straight away on the first glance.

Know that the longer that you are sinning the more you are holding yourself back. Do not hold yourself back, you only lose when you commit sins.

Remember that knowledge will not be deposited in a dirty place or in a place undeserving. Those who claim to know will only be able to repeat, they will not be able to add, neither will they have a good effect on the people around them. For others this may be leading them away from Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala and becomes a proof against them.

Chapter Thirteen

Character With Other Students

This is something that I have the most difficulty with. I am struggling to implement this myself.

You may be studying with the teacher in a small group or a large group either way, be aware of the needs of those around you. Some of them may know more than you and they may also know less but realise their intention may make them excel faster and quicker than you.

You might hear a question, from them, asked that you can answer, should remain silent and allow the teacher to answer. Take note of the answer; as you will always get more from the teacher. If you answer the question then you lose the chance to learn more, you know the answer but the teacher may give you more details that you did not know. So, now you can add more details to your answer.

If you know more than the students around you, you should let them have the floor for questions, prefer them to yourself for questions. When they have asked their questions and then ask yours especially if they have benefit. Sometimes you may know that asking a certain question will benefit those around you so ask that question.

You should let them finish and not interrupt their voices or questions, allow them time. If you know more then you should not be overbearing in the class as this will have a negative effect on the class. This may even cause people to leave the class as they can get easily disenchanted, when the subject is difficult.

You should give and return Salams and not show arrogance, as it will destroy you, internally and externally. Be kind to them and help them in their studies,

if you are asked a question then answer and thank Allah Subhanu wa ta'ala, for sending someone to confirm your knowledge.

Help your fellow student as much as you are able to do so and do not see any action as small for them.

Do not be so arrogant as not to ask them for clarification, as they may have caught what you missed.

Chapter Fourteen

Instructions Of The Teacher

You should try your up most to follow through on any instructions that the teacher has given you. They want the best for you and you can get benefit from things that you may not have initially seen.

If the teacher tells you to do something disliked or Haram, if it's Haram you should not do it and re-consider your decision to study with him. If it's disliked it may be minor or major, avoid if major.

If the teacher says something once you could be forgiven for forgetting and if he repeats it then, you must follow up. He/She is stressing the importance of this, try the action at least once but this action should not upset anyone, nor should cause discomfort to anyone. For example praying Tahajjud, try it but if they say something unreasonable then leave it.

If it's to revise or repeat something, repeat or revise the lesson as much as you can, this can only bring benefit.

One important note is that the scholar will be able to know what's best for the student and this will mean to avoid certain books. Purely because if you read a certain book it may confuse your current knowledge. The example of this is a student of the Shafi school reading texts which include Hanafi rules he may not be able to distinguishing them. This could cause the student to mix between the schools without knowing.

So listen to the teacher and pay attention.

If he does scold you on an issue then do not repeat it and correct yourself.

Chapter Fifteen

Knowledge

Knowledge is the most important thing that you'll do in your life; you have to treat it like that. You have to give it, its right, it is truth and you have to ready to carry it to people but most of all yourself. Learn the basics, everything that you need every day, and then affirm yourself in it, until you know it well.

Know that you have to study to get somewhere and you have to keep studying in order to get to your destination. When you know it enough you must teach even just to one person and don't every turn anyone down.

You must leave things that take you away from knowledge or knowledge will leave you, it's that simple. You must devote yourself to knowledge it must be your only concern and all your concerns.

People of knowledge need to be sincere in obtaining knowledge, not for show or grandiose or to win arguments or elevate yourself in front of others. It has to be solely for Allah and to revive the religion in yourself first; through the means of practice.

Chapter Sixteen

Signs of Success

This will only become clear after a period of time. Unless you have insight then you may be able to tell in a short space of time. You will find the circumstances around your studies easy in that there is not excessive hardship.

Although this is not the only sign. The greatest sign will be when your teacher answers your question without you asking it. The question may be from a question that you may or may not have got the answer for or from a question you are about to ask. This is an amazing sign and if you get it with a particular teacher then stick to that teacher for as long as possible.

There are other signs like you may come across books that no one else has or that you'll answer a question without realising you knew the answer! Sometimes you may find a book with much blessings and this book was meant to be found by you. Sometimes you may be asked something that you once knew but could not recall then the question is asked and out comes the answer!

Or you may find the time spent studying with a scholar; more beneficial than other times that you study. When you see some signs be thankful for the endless graces of Allah (mighty and majestic) and keep studying.

Chapter Seventeen

Advice For The Teacher

The teacher must be aware of the area that he is in. If he is not from that area then he must study the area, the people and the circumstances. He must know what he could face and he must know what people are doing and try to figure out a way to reach them.

The teacher must not be proud or boastful this will prevent people taking knowledge from him and this will confirm what people think of some teachers. That they are not able to relate to the people because they are arrogant.

As a teacher of Islam a person must be aware that he is there to serve other people not there to serve himself. He has to be ready to speak to people and serve them without them finding him difficult to approach. So be easy to approach and do not be hasty to judge.

The teacher must make time for other people and be prepared to sacrifice his own time for other people. They must realise that they are servant for the people and they have to do their best for them.

They must also be aware they will receive harm from those people who are the most ignorant. They are the ones who have sat in your lectures and not heeded then gone against you on a matter that is minor.

Know that you may not be able answer every question and that you may need to check things up. Never be afraid to say that you do not know, as even this can help a student, sometimes.

Being a teacher, in this time, you will be aware of the sins of people more than the good sometimes you have to be aware of this. Note that people do not value Islamic knowledge anymore and some even belittle knowledge!! So any teacher in this time knows that they are belittled by people who want

progress without understanding things correctly so they may want to finish a book without understanding it.

You may have students who are lazy so be prepared to work hard to get them up to scratch and do not turn any student away.

Many teachers are not paid well nor do they receive the benefits that other professions receive, even though they deserve more.

A teacher is someone who corrects, changes and puts things right but in many ways people are happy being in darkness and it is too difficult to wake them up.

Chapter Eighteen

Respecting The Teacher

This is something that I need to practice.

Respecting the teacher is one of the manners that a student needs to show; if he is to progress with the blessings of his teachers. When the teacher speaks you should be listening and never interrupt them. If you need to ask them a question then do in the manner we have explained before.

When the teacher enters the room you can stand for them, this is your choice the best teachers will tell you not to do this. You may find some teachers not receptive to accepting presents, do not mind this because they want the reward for their teaching in paradise not now. Most teachers will accept presents but put thought into them and do not give them something that they will not use. Some teachers may not accept presents so be mindful of this.

The best way to sit in front of a teacher is on your knees, if you cannot do this then resting on either leg, if you cannot do this then sitting cross legged but never raise your knees in front of the teacher, this shows disrespect. If you have teaching rooms that have chairs then use them, as the above information is for those who are sitting in the traditional way on the floor.

Sometimes, scholars write complicated things in their books which lead the student to be confused. The student should show respect to the scholar whose book he is reading and make a supplication for him. I have seen many students disrespect the scholar whose book they are reading, do not think that you are going to anywhere by doing this. You will not benefit from the knowledge that you have learnt and incur the wrath of losing knowledge. It is a real wrath of God to loss knowledge because you have disrespected a teacher.

Chapter Nineteen

Instruments Of Learning

Respect your books, pens, paper and anything you use to in order to learn because this will help you attain a greater level. A person who respects his book will get knowledge that is not written in his book. It was said that a Indian scholar used to memorise any page of a book he saw. When asked about this he said that he never touched a piece paper without being in a state of ablution.

If you see a pen on the floor pick it up and put it somewhere safe. Do not throw pens across the room and try not to forget them when you leave a teaching space.

When carrying book try to carry it with your right hand. If you have are carrying bag with books in them then try not to place them on the floor, either put them on a table, another seat or in another place.

Do not raise your feet about any books that you have in your house or elsewhere. Books that you have at home should be kept in a respectable place and not in a place where they can be torn by children.

Chapter Twenty

Harm From Others When Learning

Now that you are studying be prepared for harm from people. This can manifest itself in a number of different ways. Someone can belittle you when speaking about an issue which you have studied and they have not. Typically, someone may be talking to you about an issue and insist that what they said was correct. As well as denying what you have said even though it may be the soundest position.

They may not be aware that you have studied these issues or they may want to show their intelligence to you, by informing you about something that they think you do not know. This is bad enough with a student but with a scholar it's much worse. So use the appropriate manners by saying something like, I know you already know this... Then continue your statement or question.

If you are speaking with someone who has studied the religion with trusted scholars over the years; know that your opinion or what you have read in a book a few days ago may not be correct.

Also note that people may be jealous that you are studying with a certain scholar or a certain text. So be aware of this, you need to keep an eye on this. Although, it does not happen often because most people are unaware of the benefits of sacred knowledge and the blessings that it brings. Even if you told you them what you are studying they may not know what it is!

Chapter Twenty One

Respecting Scholars

This may be an obvious post about a subject that is well known and does not need to be spoken about. I have seen this recently and it needs re-iterating because it is really ugly.

No one should ever criticise another scholar, by name, when they are in the public domain. There is simply no excuse for it, none at all. If you do not like that teacher for whatever reason then hold your tongue and do not say anything. Do not do anything that could affect your learning because mocking scholars will make your learning harder.

One of the other points of respecting a scholar is respecting each others spiritual masters or murshids/sheikhs. Followers/murids of different leaders should not mock or debase other masters. This is not only wretched to hear about, it is even worse to see. So do not do this, ever.

If you have a negative feeling for a scholar, then hold it in and do not articulate it, ever.

Chapter Twenty Two

Respecting The Sacred Word

This is something that we have touched on earlier but it needs to be reiterated. We have to show respect to sacred knowledge and all that contains or bears sacred knowledge. This means books, papers, audio and of course scholars.

Respecting a scholar means let them finish speaking, never interrupt, showing humbleness in their presence, asking the right questions and showing them the upmost respect. For more details about this please see previous post.

Respecting religious materials is respecting anything with anything religious on it. It does not matter if it is Arabic, English, Urdu, Turkish, Malay or any other language. You have to respect it and treat it correctly. Some people think it is okay to place translations of the Quran on the floor, then refuse to pick it up when told to. If you are a Muslim and you need proof to show respect to the speech of God, then you better think again and wake up. How many things do we do without proof?

If you have respect to religious materials then this shows you are a good student. If you do not show respect then this makes me think that there is nothing good in that student of knowledge. The common person has an excuse because they have little knowledge but even then the common folk show the Quran a lot of respect.

Remember to never interrupt someone who recites a verse of the Quran, reads a hadith and then the speech of the companions etc. Let that person finish and disagree (if you must) with the opinion but do not interrupt the narration.

Chapter Twenty Three

Cutting Corners

This is one of the traps of the student of knowledge. This happens when the student learns something and then performs that practice lazily. Instead of performing an action to the best of his ability he performs the basics of that action without trying. Unlike before and sometimes worse than before! What we mean is when a student learns a subject and finds out all the details then they perform the action to its minimum. Rather than perform it to its maximum, as before.

Other people can see him performing actions and can see his errors but because he is doing just the basics; it looks as if he is not performing the action correctly. He knows himself that the action is valid but he is missing something yet he is not concerned. In this case the person who does not know what makes his action valid and invalid is better because he tries his best.

For example if the student knows that touching his knees makes his bowing/Ruku valid and he does not have to have his hands on his knees and pause. Others, who only know the Sunna, may think that his action is invalid because he is doing something that they do not know is valid.

The student of knowledge has to be aware of this and try to perform actions as best as he can and not perform just the basics unless he is in a situation that stipulates it. For example he only has a few minutes to perform a prayer and if he tries to complete to the best of his ability then his prayer be invalid because he would've left the time. In this situation he can do the basics.

Just a general point, people need to find out what makes their prayers valid and invalid. This is a basic knowledge that people need to seek.

Chapter Twenty Four

When Imparting Knowledge

When you reach a point that you can teach a certain science or law it becomes obligatory for you to teach it. So try to find people that you can teach this can be anyone.

One of the most important things that you will realise is that you will be repeating your knowledge over and over again. In some cases you will be repeating the same answer to the same person, several times.

Sometimes when you have answered a question, the questioner will feel that you have not answered the question and will keep asking you the same question. This is some of the types of things that you'll face when teaching.

Also know that you will face attacks from people who are less knowledgeable than yourself. Sometimes it's out of arrogance and other times it's out of ignorance. Either way you have to be prepared for complaints against your knowledge even complaints against you.

This is part of the path of knowledge that there are many thorns in your way when teaching. It is not simply about getting the best seat in the room and delivering the lesson. You will face attacks and you have to be ready for them.

Chapter Twenty Five

Gaps in study

You may experience gaps in your studies which can be unexpected and unwanted. As any student will inform you they want to keep their progress up and do not want to have many breaks, as this hinders learning.

It can also hinder finishing text because of the long gap. We are not talking about missing weeks but we are talking about missing months. If this occurs then try to go to deen intensives of other teachers. This may help keep the momentum of learning because a large gap could cause a difficulty when restarting the lessons.

The best use of the spare time you have is to study and re-check what you have learnt. Rather than occupy yourself with something else new. You could read a related text or even read something that is unrelated but that should only be done to refresh the mind. As you may have times when you get bogged down in a subject.

Most of all knowledge requires you to be consistent and persistent; if you are neither of these things then you may never reach your goal or you may take longer than others.

As Roy Castle used to say, "Dedication is what you need; if you want to be a record breaker!" We need to show more dedication in a time where you cannot study with your regular teacher.

Chapter Twenty Six

Document Your Studies

Document your studies. With which scholar and what subject or text that you have studied. Make a note of the dates as well. Keep it with you and make sure you update it. Also look back and thank Allah for showing you mercy so you can study and giving you the ability to keep attending classes.

Most of keep all your ijazahs (permissions to teach a text or a general one) this is very important. Even if it's for a book that you consider minor, keep it and make a note of its chain of narrators.

There is a lot of good in performing the gratefulness prostration when you have completed a text.